

March 18, 1999

Hollywood Money and the Democratic Party

Oscar[®] Rides a Donkey (and Vice Versa)

The Oscars[®] get handed out this Sunday. Even now, the ballots are being counted. Over at the Federal Election Commission, however, the results are in already — and the big, big winner in Hollywood is the Democratic Party.

As the film clips are being played Sunday night, it might be interesting to consider some of the non-aesthetic facts about the Oscar[®] nominees. (The political contribution information used below covers only the last six years.)

- “Saving Private Ryan” has been nominated as best picture. It was produced and directed by that movie-making genius, Steven Spielberg. Mr. Spielberg is one of the Democratic Party’s major contributors. His six-year record includes the following:

- \$481,023 to the Democratic National Committee (DNC),
- \$ 27,000 to the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee,
- \$ 16,000 to 11 Democratic Senators (including \$4,000 to the top recipient, Senator Boxer),
- \$ 10,000 to Democratic campaigns for the House of Representatives,
- \$ 12,350 to various other Democratic campaigns, and
- \$ 6,000 to the Hollywood Women’s Political Committee.

Mr. Spielberg also gave \$1,000 to Senator Specter. This is the only instance in which the name of any of the Oscar[®] nominated movie-makers appears alongside a Republican. This gives the DNC an opening to describe Mr. Spielberg’s giving pattern as “bipartisan.” That’s bipartisan in a ratio of 552:1.

- Mrs. Spielberg is a Democratic contributor, also. Last year, for example, both Kate Capshaw-Spielberg and Mr. Spielberg gave \$10,000 to the Clintons’ legal defense fund.
- Gary Levinsohn, another producer of “Saving Private Ryan,” contributed to Senator Feinstein (Mr. Spielberg did not).

- Tom Hanks, nominated for best actor for his starring role in "Saving Private Ryan," also gave \$1,000 to Senator Feinstein.
- Ted Danson, who had a role in the movie, gave \$1,000 to Clinton-Gore and another \$5,250 to other Democrats.
- "Shakespeare in Love" is another nominee for best picture. It was produced by Harvey Weinstein, another generous Democratic donor. His six-year record includes the following:
 - \$17,000-plus to nine United States Senators (Senator Boxer got \$8,000),
 - \$15,000 to other Democratic campaigns,
 - \$ 5,000 to Friends of Al Gore,
 - \$ 4,000 to House Democrats,
 - \$ 2,000 to Clinton-Gore.

Last year, Mr. Weinstein also pitched in \$10,000 for the Clintons' legal defense fund.

- Another producer of "Shakespeare in Love" is Edward Zwick. He contributed to Senator Boxer and to a Democratic fund in New York.
- "The Thin Red Line" is a third nominee for best picture. It starred Sean Penn who gave \$1,000 to Senator Boxer.
- Ed Harris, who has been nominated as best supporting actor for his role in "The Truman Show," gave \$1,000 to Democratic campaigns.

This list is only the tip of a very large and cash-rich iceberg.

We have reviewed only the contribution history of this year's Oscar® nominees. Of course, most of Hollywood's big Democratic donors have not been nominated for Academy Awards, so at the ceremony keep your eye out for other big Democratic donors such as Michael Douglas, Barbra Streisand, Kim Basinger, Alec Baldwin, Don Henley, Gail Zappa, David Geffen, Haim Saban (who brought the world the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers), and Norman Lear.

In Hollywood, when the envelope is opened, the winner is . . . the Democratic Party. Thank God Republicans can rely on the rest of America.

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[Sources: FEC data was taken from http://www.tray.com/cgi-win/_allindiv.exe. We believe the data is current through the end of 1998; however, some contributions that were made in the latter part of that year may not yet be in the data base. Data on the Clinton Legal Defense Fund was taken from http://www.publicdisclosure.org/cgi-win/cdf_max.exe.]